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Dear Interested Citizen

Back in September 2003, we presented a proposed action for the Davis Fire Recovery Project. In summary, the purpose and need of the project is to facilitate recovery of habitat within the Davis Late-Successional Reserve (LSR), and to place an emphasis on retrieving economic value in the remainder of the fire where no live trees are present. Since then, there has been extensive public review and a team of agency resource specialists have developed a range of alternatives that respond to issues raised during the process, while meeting the stated purpose of the project. At this point in the process, we would like to provide descriptions of these alternatives and solicit your comments, in order to gauge if we have adequately listened to your comments so far, and have an adequate range of alternatives.
The following alternatives meet the purpose and need in varying degrees. The "No Action" alternative is also included and fully developed as it is required and serves as a baseline to evaluate the other alternatives.

Alternative A, No Action: This alternative would not actively manage or recover economic value within the entire 21,000 acre fire area. Custodial processes such as road management, hazard tree felling for public safety and fire suppression would continue.

Alternative B, Proposed Action (Figure 1**):** This alternative is the one that was mailed to interested people back in September 2003. Approximately 6,385 acres of the 21,000 acre fire would include removal of dead trees that have an economic value. It is also important to talk about what would remain for values including those species of animals that depend upon burned trees for their life cycle. Snags would be retained across the fire area. Dependent on species, site potential, and strategic location, the range of snags retained would generally include the largest (up to 12 per acre).

This alternative maximizes ground-based harvest methods for the most economically efficient alternative. More appropriate harvest methods such as skyline and helicopters would be used where access is marginal, soils are more prone to being displaced, or areas near water.

Reforestation (conifer planting) would occur throughout the areas of the fire where complete mortality occurred, on approximately 8,000 acres. A mix of species and relatively wide spacing would be used to allow diversity of future stands and to accelerate the recovery of large trees important for Late Successional Reserve objectives.

A strategy was developed to protect high value areas into the future, such as developed recreation sites and remaining green or live trees within the Late Successional Reserve. Fuels reduction by removing small diameter trees (less than or equal to 12 inches) would occur on

1,420 acres. Trees 12" and less would be thinned and generally removed by hand along strategic areas. An upper diameter limit of 6" would be used in areas that provide the most important habitat for northern spotted owls.

An analysis of the transportation system provided information on where road closures would be most beneficial. A total of 28 miles (net) would be closed. In addition, more than 5 miles of roads would be completely obliterated. Because of the high level of existing roads, less than 11 miles of temporary roads would be needed to access the interior of proposed units. Constructed for a specific short-term purpose and to prevent low-level casual use, such roads are decommissioned at the completion of their intended use.

Other aspects of this alternative that include recovery of habitat are also included in all the action alternatives. These are riparian planting along Odell Creek (175 acres), planting to accelerate key elk habitat surrounding Davis Lake (175 acres), and retention of 15% of the area that remains untreated.

Alternative C (Figure 2): This alternative was developed to respond to a key issue that concerns soil productivity. Identical in the area proposed for salvage as Alternative B (6,385 acres), it differs in the harvest system. Using aerial harvest systems over more ground (over 3,200 acres), we expect less soil displacement and temporary road construction (9 miles) would occur.

All other activities such as road closures, reforestation, and fuels reduction would occur as described in Alternative B.

Alternative D (Figure 3): This alternative was developed to respond to two key issues. Fire events of this magnitude provide a short-term benefit to those species that depend upon standing dead trees for their life cycle. Alternative B proposed to remove some of these trees. Also, several respondents believe passive management of the forest (or limited intervention) is best for post-fire landscapes. Some consider this is especially true for forests where the primary objective is to manage for species that depend upon late and old forests.

Alternative D would not remove trees with commercial value within the Davis Late-Successional Reserve (approximately 60% of the fire area), except to provide safe public access. Three main access roads (9 miles) would have hazard trees felled and removed. Also, no artificial regeneration, or planting of conifers, would occur except on approximately 175 acres to accelerate the replacement of habitat in the designated key elk area around Davis Lake.

Outside the reserve on 1,045 acres, recovery of economic value would be the primary focus. Harvest systems would be utilized that are appropriate for the ground. Less than three miles of temporary road construction would be needed. Reforestation would occur on those acres where salvage and prior artificial regeneration has occurred.

In this alternative, access management (road closures), small diameter fuels treatments, riparian planting, and 15% retention within harvest areas would occur as detailed in Alternatives B and C.

Opportunity to Comment

Please give us your thoughts on any of the four alternatives detailed in this letter, or others you believe we should consider. There will be another opportunity in January or early February of 2004 to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. At that time, we may include a

tour of the fire area, depending on access. If you have additional questions, or would like more details, please direct your comments to Phil Cruz, care of Chris Mickle, at the address or phone number listed at the top of the letter. Also, you can access the document and/or comment on Deschutes National Forest website at: www.fs.fed.us/centraloregon/index.html. Click on "Projects and Plans" twice, "Crescent Ranger District", and finally "Davis Fire Projects".

Sincerely,

/s/*Phil Cruz*

PHIL CRUZ
District Ranger

Enclosures